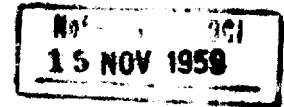


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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES



5 November 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: A Reappraisal of Soviet Policy

1. The course of Soviet foreign policy over the last year has been puzzling. Exactly one year ago Khrushchev precipitated the Berlin crisis, potentially the most dangerous challenge the Soviets have so far posed to the West. Yet over the last two months we have heard from him pleas for peaceful coexistence more insistent, and apparently more sweeping in their implications, than the Soviets have offered at any time in the postwar period.

Is There a New Phase in Soviet Policy?

2. Since the change was sudden, coming precisely at the moment of the President's invitation for Khrushchev to visit the US, it was possible to be skeptical at first. But his

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subsequent behavior tended to support the view that there had been a major turning in Soviet tactics. He began by preaching the new gospel, that all international issues must now be handled by negotiation in an atmosphere of relaxed tension, to an obviously ill-disposed audience in Peking. Doubts and some confusion over the new line were reported from Eastern Europe, but in East Germany the Soviets ordered Ulbricht to stop agitating the Berlin issue. Soviet domestic propaganda consistently led the Soviet people to hope for a promising new phase in relations with the West.

3. With Khrushchev's speech of October 31 it is clear that Soviet policy is entering a new phase as compared with that of a year ago. The speech was a formal programmatic utterance before the Supreme Soviet. It contained a lengthy historical and theoretical justification for the new course, replete with citations from Lenin. Its central message was that the dangers of nuclear war were so immense that responsible men had no alternative but to negotiate peaceful accommodations on those outstanding issues which, if they were left untended,

would surely bring the ultimate calamity. It promised that the USSR would approach this task with "flexibility" and a willingness to make "mutual concessions." It branded those in the Communist Bloc who might oppose such a policy -- whether these might be Chinese, certain Satellite leaders, or even elements in the CPSU was not made clear -- as advocates of "adventurism." The force of this classic Communist epithet was strengthened by linking it to the hated name of Trotsky, whose "Pilate's objections" to Lenin's policy on the Brest-Litovsk peace in 1918 "played into the hands of the German imperialists."*

What Does the Current Phase in Soviet Policy Mean and
What are Its Limits?

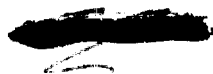
4. In trying to appraise the change in the Soviet attitude, we should be clear as to what it is not. It is not a defensive maneuver. It is not suggested that the Soviets are willing to pay any serious price for reducing tensions.

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The close parallel between Trotsky's advocacy in the early years of a "leftist" doctrine of "permanent revolution" and the new Chinese thesis of "uninterrupted revolution" will not be lost on the elite of all the Communist parties.

Khrushchev thinks that he is bargaining from strength. "The main cause of the changed international atmosphere," we are told, "is the growing might and international influence of the Soviet Union and of all countries of the world socialist system."

5. Disarmament has become for Khrushchev "the main question." He showed himself much exercised in his speech to establish the "sincerity" of his UN proposal which he said had been questioned by skeptics in the West. Khrushchev's sudden thrusting of disarmament to the forefront -- it appeared in his first speech in the US without the usual prior buildup in Soviet propaganda -- probably had several motives: a) It was a device for pushing the critical Berlin issue into the background at a time when he felt that the Soviet demands could not be pushed farther without getting into a situation of serious risk; b) It was the theme best suited for propaganda exploitation in connection with his dramatic appearance at the UN; c) While the UN appeal for total disarmament is scarcely credible, the circumstances under which it was made might have been calculated to give added push to the partial


disarmament measures which may be the real Soviet interest. These include long-sought Soviet aims -- a ban on nuclear weapons, atom free zones, abandonment of foreign bases, withdrawal of troops from Germany.

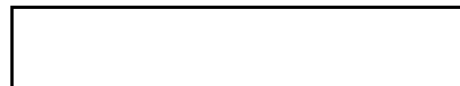
6. Khrushchev is no longer demanding the West's departure from Berlin as an immediate first step, nor threatening a separate treaty with East Germany to force the West out. Instead he speaks of an agreed peace treaty for Germany as a whole from which a Berlin settlement "follows naturally." Evidently he does not now think that the questions of an all-German settlement and of Berlin should be attacked directly. He probably hopes that they can be solved as the end product of certain agreements on disarmament, especially those which would alter the military dispositions of both sides on German territory. His objectives in Germany remain unchanged, however. They are acceptance by both sides of a Germany indefinitely divided, a West Germany denied full participation in NATO's defense programs, and an arrangement about Berlin which makes the withdrawal of Western influence certain in the end.

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How Long Will the New Phase Last?

7. It seems certain that Khrushchev now has in mind a fairly prolonged phase of negotiation under conditions of relaxed tension. The coming summit is seen as only the opening act of the drama. His speech of 31 October, with its Leninist analysis of the world situation which makes the course he has charted the only possible one for the CPSU, and all Communists, to follow, is in itself a profound commitment. He could not reverse himself at an early date without provoking considerable confusion among the Communist parties. Moreover, he has certainly given rise to great expectations among the Soviet people which, although they would not be binding for him, he would doubtless be most reluctant to disappoint in any obvious way.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES



ABBOT SMITH
Acting Chairman

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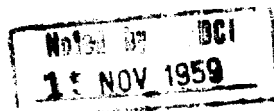
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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

The Board has been wrestling with the problem of Soviet policy. It has two memos on hand, and considers neither wholly satisfactory. But here they are.



Abbot Smith



5 November 59
(DATE)

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FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

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